1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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and as an integral part of the culture. Murngin myth dies hard, and ownership of land is in Murngin myth even after the final destruction of a particular clan. It would never occur to a victorious group to annex another's territory, even though the entire male population were destroyed and the dead men's women and children taken by the victors. In the passage of time the clan using it would absorb it into their own territory and the myth would unconsciously change to express this. In the thought of the Murngin, land and water, people and clan are an act of the creator totem and the mythological ancestors, who always announce in myth and ceremony that this is the country of such and such a clan; to expropriate this land as a conscious act would be impossible. Just as the totem, the creator, and the members are a permanent and inextricable part of the culture, so is the clan's ownership of the land. This will become clearer when the concepts of birth, death, and totem are associated, and the sacred wells of the clans considered.

The forty or fifty-odd people who belong to a clan do not all live in the land of the clan. All sisters and daughters, since the rule of marriage is patrilocal after the first year or two, go to their husband's clan to live and rear their families. This means that fully half of the members of the clan live after the age of puberty with a group belonging to the opposite moiety. On the other hand, the wives of the clansmen have come from clans of the opposite moiety and make up the difference in population caused by the loss of the group's own females.

Friendly clans always live together during the seasons when food is plentiful in certain area. When the turtles of Buckingham Bay are laying hundreds of eggs nightly along the Djirin coast, the Birkili and Wangurri may be found there. When the cycad palm nuts are ready for picking on Millingimbi Island, the surrounding clans gather for the period of plenty. This is done as a right, no invitation being necessary and no one questioning this right as long as peace reigns. Let there be trouble and cause for a possible killing, and the visitors return to their own land, even though their visit has taken on the nature of a permanent residence.

The most important unifying concept in the whole of clan ideology is that of the sacred water hole in which reposes the spiritual unity of clan life. It is the fundamental symbol of clan solidarity. From it come all the eternal qualities, and to it those qualities return when they have been lived or used by members of the clan. Water, in Murngin thought, is one of the most important symbols of spiritual life.

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*Yeppa* ⟷ *Wawa* and *Yukiyuko* (sister ⟷ older and younger brother) 593

There are the same varieties of yeppa as of wawa and yukiyuko. 602
There is little difference in the behavior of a yukiyuko-yeppa and a wawa-yeppa relationship, except that if yukiyuko is an adolescent or child, he will not have an older brother's control over his sisters; but if he is an adult he has as much influence in directing their affairs as has his older brother. Yeppa calls any brother born before her "wawa" and any brother born after her "yukiyuko," exactly as a man would. With the above reservation, we can treat the yukiyuko-yeppa and the wawa-yeppa relationships as one, remembering of course the varying degree of closeness in the relationship between wawa and yukiyuko, and realizing its effect on the relationship we are now considering.

The sister and brother relationship is surrounded with taboos. If a brother speaks in the hearing of his sister, tribal or blood, he utters his words in a low voice, since she is not supposed to hear him. She speaks in the same manner before him. He never talks to her directly, nor she to him. He does not use obscenities in front of her as he [576] would before most women (including his mother, daughter's daughter, and father's sister), nor will he allow anyone else to indulge in such language before her in his presence. They never sleep in the [513] same hut or camp except as infants. At a very early age they are separated. Yeppa always helps her brothers if they are involved in a fight. She would not only ask assistance of her relatives but also give aid herself unless she felt a divided loyalty, in which case she would, with the help of other women, try to prevent a fight.

A brother is like a second father to a sister. If she is caught in 583 adultery he gives her a beating and, if not stopped, tries to kill her. 684 When Daoper's wife ran off with Bengaliwe her near brothers gave her an unmerciful beating and might have killed her had not other relatives interfered. Even if a brother saw her own husband copulating with his sister, he would become angry and try to beat her. However, he is careful not to see them.

A yukiyuko always accompanies yeppa when she first goes to her 593 husband's clan to live after their marriage. The brother is usually pre- 591 adolescent, but sometimes he may be older. He is supposed to look out for his sister, seeing that she does not commit adultery, preventing other men from seducing her, and by his presence protecting her from ill treatment by her husband.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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583 as husband and wife. They have been copulating before, frequently
836 with the knowledge of the father and mother, but the latter pretend ignorance.

Usually an older man with a wife or two acquires a young woman in her adolescent period. A young girl often starts living in her husband's household before menstruation. The dué usually takes her for fear of having her stolen from her parents by some other dué. He has no intercourse with her during this period. When the girl is old enough he may without ceremony start actual intercourse. Or he may take her out into the bush on the ruse that they are going fishing. He asks her to get some drinking water or some wood. While she is gone he ties a small piece of opossum fur string around his index finger, and when she comes back he asks her to lie down. He places the finger inside her vagina; then they return to camp, and sexual intercourse starts. This minor ceremony is not frequently practiced.

841 When an older man takes a pre-adolescent girl he helps the mother perform the ceremony at her first menstruation. After this is over the husband paints her with red ochre (this is always done for mourners after the death of a relative to avoid ceremonial uncleanliness, and is used in ceremonies).

841 Ordinarily there is but little taboo on a menstruating woman. She sleeps in the same house or camp with her husband, though the couple 773 do not copulate. The only restriction in daily life is that no man would allow a wife or any other woman to go out in a canoe with him during this period, for otherwise the great mythical snake, Bapa Indi (the Great Father), would swallow them all. The story is told that not so long ago a man took his two wives in a canoe for a trip from one island to another. One of them was menstruating. When they had gone for a short time Yurlunggur (Bapa Indi) smelt the unclean odor, came out of the subterranean depths, and swallowed them all. This modern folk tale, which is believed by all Murngin, fits into the tribe's most fundamental myth of the two old creator sisters.

582 The above describes how a man ordinarily obtains a wife and what usually happens; but often a woman is not taken from her parents for some time because her future husband may be away in the country of a more distant clan. Various men may also dispute the right to her, owing to a gawel's exceeding his rights by promising her to several men, or because of a wrong marriage of the mokul or gawel, with the true gurrong of mokul demanding the daughter and the true waku of gawel claiming her. If the marriage had been according to

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tribal law, the waku of gawel and the gurrong of mokul would have been the same person; with the wrong marriage a discord is created in the first ascending generation, and sometimes considerable time elapses before a woman is taken in marriage.

After marriage a young man usually lives for a short period of varying length with his parents-in-law. After this he may go to his own people and take his wife with him. There is often much protest by the wife when she leaves her parents, but they aid her husband. When a child is born, its parents, if not already with the wife's parents, return there so the grandparents can see the baby. This is only for the first child, although the parents of both the husband and wife are always pleased and anxious to see all the grandchildren.

When a girl leaves her parents for the first time, a younger brother accompanies her (see page 65), a custom called "olokork." (The sister's husband is also dué to her young brother, just as this younger brother is galle to his sister's dué.) The husband looks out for the younger man and assumes the place of a father to him during his residence there.

When a child is born the new union is greatly solidified; it now has become a fully developed family, and except for the wife's being stolen by another man there would be little chance of permanent rupture even if she ran away. Tribal sentiment would be against her and her paramour or anyone who might have stolen her. The children would seldom go with her in such a case, and the strong attachment a Murngin mother has for her offspring would force her to come back to them. The writer has recorded several instances of a woman's going through the most difficult privations and risking probable death to return to her children after she had been stolen by a man from another tribe.

If a camp has been ambushed and the men all killed in a general tribal war, the women and children are taken by the conquerors and given as wives to the men who are in the right relationship to them.

A man wants as many wives as he can get and still keep his peace with the other males of his clan. The average is about three and a half for middle-aged men; but there is a recorded case of one native with seventeen wives, the majority having been obtained by stealing them or killing their husbands. He also married "wrong." There is a close correlation of having many wives with fighting strength, or with being the son of a man powerful in war who had thereby acquired a large number of women whose brothers would be gawels to

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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personality of the waku to his gawel. The gifts are always more numerous from the younger man to the older; but when a gawel receives ranga string, a ranga, or the hair belt, he must reciprocate by giving a return present to show his appreciation, or he would offend his waku.

When a gawel gives his daughter to his sister's son, this is not merely a gift, for the waku by tribal law has a right to her and would fight for her if the gawel tried to give her to someone else. He would also feel that he had the right to gawel's wife's second daughter and the privilege of declining the offer of a third. There would be an obligation, too, on gawel to give his waku another wife if the first were barren or died before giving birth to a child. If a waku's wife runs away from him, his gawel would under almost all circumstances do everything possible to get her back for the husband. If he did not, he would feel obligated to give the waku another daughter in her place.

A gawel decides when the waku shall receive his daughter, or, in other words, he really determines when the tribe shall give its complete recognition to the marriage.

A group of brothers who were gawel would be divided up according to seniority among a group of waku who were brothers. The oldest gawel would have the oldest waku, and the next oldest gawel would have the next oldest waku. This is the ideal, naturally not always realized. Ideally, also, the first wife gives her first two daughters to the oldest waku and the next daughter to the next oldest waku.

When a gawel decides to give recognition to a marriage of his daughter to a waku, he instructs his wife (mokul rumeru to the waku) to build a camp for the two, and for a time residence is matrilocal (see page 77).

When it is decided that a waku is to get a gawel's daughter, the gawel shows his pleasure by giving presents to his dué, who is the boy's father, and also to yeppa, his sister, who is the boy's mother. The boy's mother would receive more than the father. A gawel is pleased, because a waku is like a second son to him, and he has strengthened his position in the tribe by this marriage tie to another clan, whereas a daughter is of little use in time of war. A waku would be of great help, both because of himself and his brothers, and also because of waku's other relatives.

Such a relationship would also prevent trouble. "If my bapa and my gawel tried to fight, I'd stop them," is a favorite remark among the Murngin men. "I wouldn't know which one to help. I'd stop both

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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CHAPTER IV

# AGE GRADING

The male's life cycle is divided on the basis of definite social groupings ordinarily spoken of as age grades. Although these social changes which take place in a man's life are at more or less definite physical age levels for all of the men, purely social factors have an equal importance in determining a man's status within the age grades. 561

Age grading is a generalizing process that cuts across the whole group, and is generically connected with the immediate families of procreation and orientation. Status in the age grades is closely correlated with a man's family position.

The peoples of the different areas apply various terms to each of the age grades. The ones used here are those which seem to be in more general use by all the Murngin. Children up until the age of six or eight are called dji-mer-ku-li regardless of sex; but as soon as he is circumcised a boy may be called by a term that denotes the ceremony which was used for his circumcision. The boy who is circumcised by the Djungguan is called par-tung-o, the name of the ground where the bushes are put in the outside camp and where his blood falls. Sometimes the names mo-lu-lu and mor-da are used for the Djungguan initiates.—This circumcision name is used from the time a boy is cut until he is dead, but is looked upon as an age-grading term to separate a male from the uncircumcised group below him. Sometimes an uncut boy is called da-pi gar-da-ko or yo-to gar-da-ko (foreskin) from his birth until he is painted for his initiation. 561 952

Wangurri married men who belong to the age grade above the younger single men are called mir-ri ma-mi, "camp." The Djambarpingu people call an as yet childless married man wonga mirri, "camp-man," which distinguishes him as a man who still has an attenuated relation with his family of orientation and has not yet established his family of procreation, who has been initiated into the various ceremonials that represent the attainment of a mature age-grade status, and who is in the main married people's camp and not 561 885 591

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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in the boys'.—During his entire life a man has age-segregating terms applied to him.

A small girl is called mielk yoto (woman child, or small child). A girl with breasts and without a child is referred to as wirkul mielk (breasts woman). From first pregnancy until death a woman is called gung-mun, literally, giver.

Very old men are more or less informally given an age-grade status and grouped under the term or-ung-o, and old women are called kar-kar-ang (white hair).

The tests of a man's ordinary status are (1) his responsibility in blood feuds and (2) the possession of children. The tests of a man's ritual status are (1) the areas of the sacred grounds into which he can penetrate and (2) the parts of the graded rituals in which he can participate. Although these two categories of status do not always coincide, they usually do, for it is felt that they should. Further, the effect of the ritual taboos of the different grades decidedly alters a man's ordinary participation in the community's daily round of events.

Small children, boys and girls, accompany their mothers to the lily swamps or oyster beds. They are carried astride their mothers' necks and put their hands around the mother's forehead. (This method is used in the initiation rituals when the little boys are carried by the men, to indicate the age status of the neophytes.)

Little girls continue to accompany their mothers and help them at first as a part of their play. Gradually they learn their part in the woman's division of labor. The division between men and women is concretely expressed by the manner in which they carry their personal baskets. The women place the string handle of the basket over their foreheads and allow the basket to hang down their backs. The men place the string handle over their arms and wear the basket hanging from their shoulders.

In due time the small boys form little groups and play by themselves such games as throwing mud balls at one another, throwing slender sticks in the manner of their fathers, and they indulge in many kinds of improvised and not very formalized play.

Young boys, before and after circumcision, carry small fish spears with them, but do not use spear-throwers. They play along the water's edge with the spears, and occasionally strike a small fish, developing their throwing technique to considerable accuracy. At this period they

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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make quite a point of carrying their personal baskets under their arms in the manner of mature men. 857

When large animals such as kangaroos, sea turtles, or emus are harpooned or speared and are being prepared for the stone fires by the older men, the little boys stand about and watch, edging as close as they can and being constantly warned to get back. Meanwhile they quarrel among themselves over the tidbits given them, e.g., the shells of the turtles from which they pick bits of meat.

A boy remains with his family of orientation until he is six or eight years of age, when he is circumcised, leaves his family, and goes to live with the boys of his own age and those who are older in a male group presided over by an older man (or men) who does not possess a wife. This does not mean that he is not in constant contact with the members of his own family. It is felt to be wrong, however, for the young man to live in his parents' camp after he reaches this age because he will be aware of their sexual relations and will learn ways of behavior not proper for a boy who has not taken a wife. Sexual relations between married people are carried on in the bush in the daytime and in camp at night. In camp they lie in such a position that they will not be noticed by their camp mates. "It is all right for children to watch, for they don't know what's happening, but when a boy gets older he sees, and then he says, 'That's good for me, too.' He goes and gets a young girl, maybe a galle to him, and they go into the bush." "When he stays in the big camp he sees too many women. If sometimes you see a small boy from the men's camp sit down in the camp with the women, he hasn't learned which way to behave proper." 591 834 [833]

The sister taboos are put into force at this same period and are active deterrents in keeping the boy away from his own camp, since the young girls remain with their parents until they are taken by their spouses. 591 593

The youths are supposed to eat in their (boys', unmarried men's) camp and sleep there, not going around with women. The boys' camp is the place for them to learn the proper etiquette in their conduct with men and women. A boy is not supposed to look "hard" at a woman. Whenever a man stares at a woman he is thought to have designs upon her. "If a boy looks hard at that girl she says to herself, 'What does he look at me for that way? I think he wants to play with me.' She goes and talks then and makes trouble." 591 867

When the younger circumcised boys are put in the unmarried men's 561 591

1; Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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561 591 camp there is a definite recognition of age. They are seen no longer as babies but as growing boys; but if the young men stay in the men's camp after they grow a beard it is then not so much a matter of age grading as such as it is a single status that is being recognized, since they are now at the proper age for marriage. It is marriage which takes males out of the men's camp and puts them in the general camp. The young men's camp recognizes sex, marriage status, and age. A large 561 number of men who are past the adolescence ceremonies, that is, the 591 totem-seeing rituals, continue in the young men's camp because they 885 have yet to obtain a wife. Further proof that marriage is a final 484 criterion of status is found in the fact that men who travel without their women stay in the men's camp, since at that moment they are single men and not to be classed as married. The only deviation from this of which the writer knows is that occasionally a man will stay in a brother's camp if visiting outside his own clan's territory.

561 In the young men's camp the oldest man takes charge and repri- mands all wrongdoers with the assistance of the near relatives of the 867 offending youths. He also gives them instructions and advice about 869 the totemic emblems when they have seen them, and informs them on the tribal mores, tradition, and mythology. At times there may be 887 more than one old man in the men's camp. The division of authority and power is then based on the personalities of the old men, the more dominant achieving a greater control over the boys. Such authority is more explicit here than one finds it in almost any other part of the Murngin behavior, with the possible exception of the ceremonial ritual when the leader decides when and where it shall be held.

224 His near female relatives carry the bones of the animal when a boy makes his first kill. It is supposed to be done for all the animals a male kills until he has a baby. The bones of the animal or bird are painted with red ocher. If a boy kills a turkey or other large bird, he does not pick it up but leaves it, returns to the camp and tells some old man. He does not say the name of the turkey but calls out "Ka-ok," the sound the turkey makes, to tell his listener what has happened so that he can pick it up. If a young man finds a porcupine (echidna), he will not kill it but goes to tell an old man of his find. [262] If it is killed, he cannot eat it. After they have been carried by the women, the bones of the larger animals are put in a basket made by the mother for this purpose. The basket is placed near the camp and no one touches it, for it would anger the relatives of the boy and a fight would follow.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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farther and farther from that of the women and uninitiated children. 561
It is within this mentality that the essential elements of Murngin age grading have their foundations.

The meanings of the age-grade structure are further elaborated in the section in Chapter XIII, pages 443-450.

### The Age Grade Chart

The accompanying chart is designed to show the general relation between a man's position in his family and his corresponding place 561 591

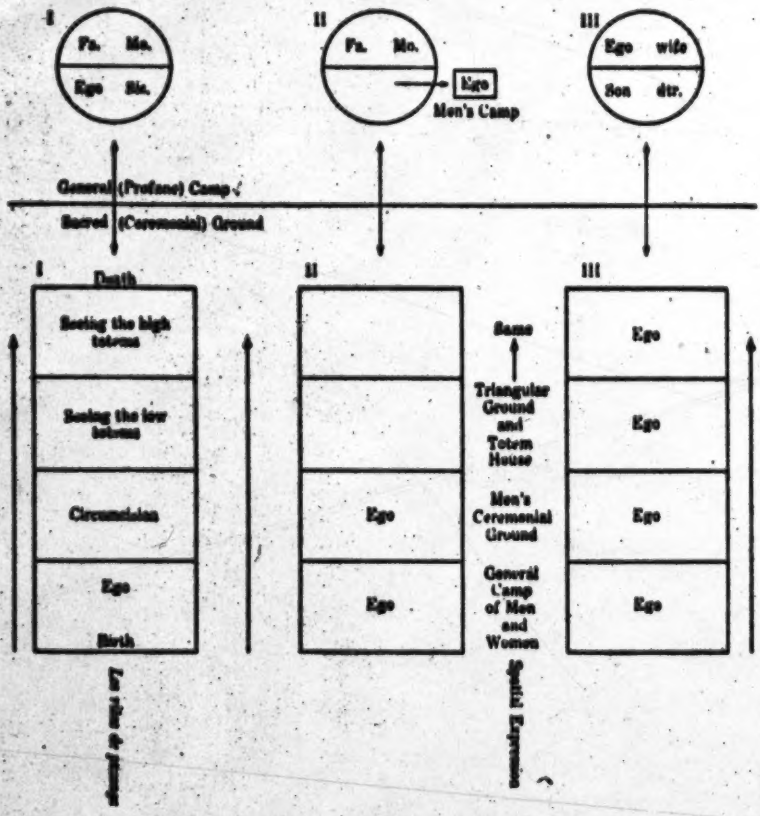


Chart IX.—The Relation of Ego and His Families to His Spatial Position in the Camp and His Age Grade Status

in the age grading during the various periods of his life. The family structure, represented by circles, is separated from the age-grade "lad-

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17



ders" by a vertical line. The upper section of the chart represents the general or profane camp, and the lower section the sacred or ceremonial ground. The arrows pointing toward both the family circle and the age-grade ladder, and running through the line separating the sacred and profane areas, are devices to show the reciprocal relation existing between the two structures. For example, Family I is shown to be in relation to Age-grade Chart I, but one sees that at this period ego, the individual, is placed within the family in which he was born and in the lower generation. If one then turns to Age-grade Ladder I, one sees that ego is placed at the bottom, between birth and the line of circumcision. In the next family, II, one sees that ego has moved out of the lower generation of the family into the men's camp but has not yet established a family of his own, while in Age-grade Ladder II one sees that he participates not only in the group below the circumcision level but also in the group above and up to the line where he sees the lower totems. In the final family circle, III, ego is in the upper generation, his children in the lower, and the reciprocating arrow shows that in the age-grade ladder he has passed through the stage of seeing the lower totems, and, as an older man, has gone to the top of the ladder by seeing the high totems.

By the device of placing ego in the four spaces we can see that his participation is much fuller than it was in II, and we can visually determine the enormous growth of a man's ceremonial activities from the time when he was in but one segment in the first age-grade ladder.

Each of the rungs of the first ladder has been named, from the bottom to the top, respectively, birth, circumcision, seeing the low totems, and seeing the high totems. In the space between Ladders II and III each of the areas between the rungs of the age grade has been named from the point of view of its general spatial expression of the tribe's ceremonial grounds.

In general, we can say there is a correspondence between (1) the relation of ego's family of orientation and ego's spatial position in the general camp (see the position of ego in relation to the family on the upper part of the age-grade chart) and (2) his ritual status and degree of penetration into the men's ground. Although these two are separate to a considerable degree in the Murngin mind, nevertheless they closely parallel each other. When a boy is old enough to be circumcised, he is initiated by this means into the men's group (see the lower half of the age-grade chart where the "steps in the ladder" represent the different parts of the rites of passage) and enters the outer grounds

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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but does not dance in the triangular ground (see the openings in the "ladder" generally classed as spatial expression); at the same time he moves to the boys' and unmarried men's camp. When a man is married he starts living openly in the main camp with his wife and becomes a wonga mirri. At approximately this time he sees Yurlunggur. At a later period, sometimes after only a year or two and other times much later, he gives his blood to Yurlunggur. In the Narra ceremonies a man tends to be much older before he sees the higher totems, which, ordinarily speaking, means he has had children or he is biologically in middle age. Although the initiation symbols vary for the older and less well-defined statuses, the fundamental division between men and women which usually identifies a man with the male group is in all initiations symbolized by the rite of circumcision, whether it be an element in the Djungguan, Marndiella, or other ritual. The circumcised penis has the mark of the snake upon it because the python has taken the foreskin and by the operation the blood has been let for the Great Father—it is a social mark on an individual.[1]

[1] An autobiographical account of a Murngin native is in preparation which will be a statement of age grading as it is seen and felt by the individual experiencing it.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17



613 171 The point arises here as to whether corporate descent groups of a unilineal nature are common in Australia. They have not been discussed for elsewhere, and the issue remains for empirical investigation. I would suggest that they are present. Take, for example, the vague concept of horde, as a wandering food-collecting group. This consists normally of a small group of men bound together by common descent, plus their wives. Without the latter this is usually of composition similar to that of the unilineal descent group. A great deal has been written, too, of the local group: this material needs re-analysis, in light of some of the problems raised here.[4]

182 428 591 We may now consider some of the general propositions relating to the structure of the unilineal descent group, and its place in the total social system, as put forward by Fortes. These aspects, he tells us, hold for both matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

613 Forde (1947) has discussed the emergence of such descent groups. It is assumed by him, and Lowie (1921), "that unilineal descent groups are not of significance among peoples who live in small groups, depend on a rudimentary technology, and have little durable property" (Fortes 1953:24). Now this is entirely relevant to our material and assumptions, for the descent group we discuss in this paper occurs among an Aboriginal Australian people who, we may assume, conform with the stipulations laid down for the nonsignificance of this group. If we find the unilineal descent group present in this particular situation, we may assume that we will find a strongly emphasized system of transmission of property rights and type of residence after marriage. In the former case, if we consider ritual, songs, invocations, emblems, patterns, and so on as inherited from father to son, with the oblique inheritance of the MARI-GUDARA line, reinforcing patriliny; and in the latter, the importance of patrilocal residence, with its implications relating to the spirit-conception center, these might well be significant reasons for their emergence. A poorly developed technology, and the virtual absence of durable property, are surely not critical factors governing emergence or nonemergence of such groups.

613 121 114 Now I assume from Fortes' (1953:25), "the most important feature of unilineal descent groups in Africa [e.g.] . . . is their corporate organization," that he would regard a group of this kind as a lineage. But can we regard the corporate unilineal descent group discussed in this paper as a lineage? This question I have suggested in the main body of my discussion. I said that each *babaru* could be viewed as a segment, while the parallel linked *babaru*, in toto, could be viewed as an effective lineage. That is to say, we would be considering the linguistic group as the lineage, segmented into effective unilineal descent groups, each of a corporate nature. But this is not a particularly satisfactory position. The question thus arises whether perhaps we can acknowledge the existence of this corporate descent group without considering it a lineage. This, of course, would lead to a more rigid definition of a lineage, when its depth and span would have to be considered.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that for Fortes (1953:25–26) the unilineal corporate descent group is a lineage: "the way this works depends on the kind of

137 zones, *rakai*, the corms of the Tall Spike Rush (*Heleocharis*
262 *sphacelata*), to which reference has already been made, form the staple food. At the same time, communal fishing
226 drives—almost the only large scale hunting activity in which
476 men and women work together—are organised. Most other communal enterprises, except those of a ceremonial nature, are carried out by groups of men or of women working
[687] independently. In most cases the actual procedure follows
[554] so closely a traditional pattern that little actual leadership
[602] is required and this is generally accepted as the responsibility of the most senior and experienced of the older men who stand in the correct kinship status to the group in whose territory the hunting "drive" is carried out. Because these methods are traditional and are therefore regarded as a recapitulation of a pattern laid down by the ancestral culture heroes, the leadership is nominal and generally unobtrusive.

592 Each family—the group consisting of a man and his wife or wives and their young children—lives as a separate unit within the camp. It generally makes its own hut, shelter or breakwind according to the season, but the essential thing is that its life is centred around its own fireside, and that each family group cooks its own food, and lives as an independent and self-contained group within the horde. As a rule only one regular meal is eaten in camp. This is at night after the people have returned from the day's hunting.

591 There is no single women's camp, and up to the time of
593 marriage a girl remains with her parents and shares with
883 her mother the work of gathering vegetable food, and of food preparation, the making of bark houses and the getting of wood and water. But in the case of a boy, after commencement of his first initiation rites, at about the age of puberty, he leaves the fireside of his parents and goes to live in the single men's camp.

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17



159 when we grew larger we did find out and some of us became sweethearts.
864 Even today these old sweethearts still get food from us and we get food and presents from them (pages 74-92).

159 When I was a little bit bigger, after I was circumcised, we little boys
857 always made fish spears and we always carried them with us. We hunted
868 birds and fish with them. Sometimes we hit a bird, and often we caught small fish. We learned then to carry our baskets over our shoulders, under our arms, just like grown men do, just as our sisters learned to carry their baskets over their foreheads.

159 When a boy gets a little bit large and he has been circumcised, he sleeps
591 with other boys and the unmarried men and he stays away from his father's and mother's camp most of the time. It is no good for young people around where married people are. They learn too much. They see women too much. Sometimes you see these boys sitting down in a camp with the women. They are not learning the way to live properly. It is all right when they play around in their own camp and they eat there and sleep there (page 127).

MAHKABOLLA'S CIRCUMCISION

159 One day I went with an older brother down through the Barlamomo
852 country to Blue Mud Bay to invite them all to come up to my country for my circumcision (pages 259-290).

When I came back from the Blue Mud Bay country many of our relatives came with me. They brought many presents. My father took me and gave me to a man who painted me very pretty with many colors. I was afraid but I tried not to show it. I looked like I did not care what happened. I was a little bit pleased, too. I was afraid because I did not understand what was going to happen to me. I did not know it then, but my father had given that man a present to paint the picture of my totem well on my breast and belly, and also to put some of my totems (symbols) on me to get me ready (page 262).

When the old men painted me for my circumcision ceremony they put kangaroo teeth stuck in beeswax on a string and tied it around my forehead. The teeth hung on my forehead over my nose.

When some of the old men were away I asked some of the little boys what they were going to do, and one of them said he thought they were going to cut me. I was very frightened. My father had taken me a little way away from the main camp where the women stay and had brought me part way to the sacred camp of the python, where only men can go. This also frightened me.

When I heard the little boys say the old men were going to cut me I sneaked away from the little boys' camp and ran to my mother. It was

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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619 they also possess rituals and myths in common, and in many
614 cases, obvious dialects of one language.

Each of these groups is a patrilineal clan, the members (apart from the wives of the men), being all related in the male line; a social group consists of a man and his brothers and sisters, his children, his son's children, his brother's children and such like. Members of such a clan must never [582] marry one another, but only members of other clans, according to the kinship rules. This rule is called local exogamy. The members of the local clan, together with [621] their wives who have come to live with them (as is the [591] custom), are called a horde.

779 The most important feature of the local clan is the link
775 which binds its members to one or more sacred totemic
614 waterholes (or wells) in the clan country. The well was [778] formed by the cult totemic hero and ancestor of the clan. In it have sojourned from the great ancestral time the spirits of all those whose earthly course is run, that is, the souls of the dead. Also associated with the well are the clan's totemic emblems and ceremonies. One important function of the latter is the maintenance of the regular order [789] of the dry and wet seasons, and the link with the creative epoch of the totem. Incidentally the souls of the dead may take up their abode, not only in the well, but also in the totemic emblems, and are believed to be present at the great totemic ceremonies. In addition they are called upon to do their part in some rites, especially in connexion with burial. [764] For example, in Chapter 14, Mr Chaseling refers to a deceased child's grandfather chanting a prayer to his own dead brother (that is, the child's 'tribal' grandfather), to come and take the child back to Buralkor, the Island of the Dead. But though a deceased person's spirit goes to this island, it re- [778] turns to the totemic well in his clan's country. This may seem contradictory to us, but just as space and time were no obstacle to the great ancestresses who came from the island,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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wives are often sisters—a relationship which is likely to be favourable to very young wives, who often are no more than ten or twelve years of age when married and go to live with their older sisters. More than likely, the mother will later follow them to the outskirts of the new family circle; there to sit by her own small fire and to be suffered in silence by her son-in-law. Young wives are married as children and are regarded by the husband almost as nieces. Older wives, according to their disposition, may treat these children kindly or force them to hew and carry and attend their whims. Older women give the younger ones rigid training in wifely duties, and the arrangement often works out happily. I have seen young wives, and old ones too, cry without restraint when they have been unable to accompany the husband on a hunting trip.

It has been said that aboriginal women are treated with constant brutality and that they play an unimportant role in the decisions of the horde. This is not so, although a wife is at the disposal of her husband and the tone of her existence depends upon his character. Stone Age woman's life is hard, like that of all Stone Age nomads, but her influence is much more important than is popularly imagined. Women join in all camp disputes—indeed, with their gossip they often cause them—and their voices can be heard above the din of shouting men and howling dogs. In peace-making ceremonies they taunt the offenders, abusing them and brandishing digging-sticks in their faces, and they urge their sons either to make peace or destroy the offender. I have seen several peace-making ceremonies collapse because women urged their men to attack the offenders who were suing for peace.

In rare instances termagants control their families and sons' families by criticizing, nagging, and threatening. Late one day I came out of the bush to a camp where Yakangaiya and his married sons were sitting quietly in